

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9-11, and 13-18 are pending. Claims 1, 4, 7 and 11 have been amended. Claims 15-18 have been added to provide Applicant with a more complete scope of protection. Claims 1, 4, 7, 11 and 15-18 are the independent claims. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

Claims 1, 4, 7, 10, 11 and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over U.S. Patent Publication 2001/0037266 (Schroeder) in view of U.S. Patent Publication 2001/0004352 (Watanabe et al.). Claims 3, 6, 9 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Schroeder and Watanabe et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent 5,852,717 (Bhide et al.).

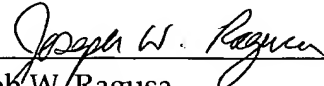
The earliest U.S. filing date of Watanabe et al. is December 13, 2000. However, the present application claims benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 119 of Japanese Application No. 2000-161352, which was filed May 31, 2000, thus antedating the filing date of Watanabe et al. A copy of a verified translation of the Priority Application is submitted herewith.

In view of the foregoing, Watanabe et al. does not qualify as prior art against the claims of the present application, thus obviating the rejections, each of which relies on Watanabe et al.. For at least this reason, all of the claims are believed patentable over the art of record.

In view of the above, Applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

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Respectfully submitted,

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